New Swimmer – Parent Manual

Welcome to the Mission Valley Seals Swim Team!

By now your swimmer will have taken their swim test and have been placed in the appropriate swim group. Along with teaching the swimmers techniques and increasing their pool stamina, the swimmers will also be learning responsibility, teamwork, integrity and sportsmanship. Please feel free to talk with the coach and other parents during practice and meets. The swim team is its own community and we value your input and rely on your involvement within the community.

For swimmers

Swimmers are asked to bring their best attitude to each practice and meet. As a swimmer progresses, they will participate in meets at various levels. Here is a quick breakdown how a meet will work.

Swimmer Eligibility Registration

To swim in a USA Swimming sanctioned event, the swimmer will be required to have a valid USA swimming ID valid on the date that the entries are due to the host team, usually the Thursday eight or nine days prior to the event start. Events start on either Friday or Saturday, so, for example, if the meet starts on Saturday, 1/11/14, the USA Swimming ID will have to be active on or before Thursday, 1/2/14.

To obtain a USA Swimming ID, an Athlete Registration form will need to be completed and turned into the San Diego-Imperial [SI] Swimming office. The application can either be mailed or turned in; **see their website for address and hours: SI Swimming is not open typical business hours**. As of the 2014 calendar year, USA Swimming will mail the ID card to the swimmer. The ID layout is generally numeric-alpha in the form of the swimmer’s birthday, the first three letters of the first name, the middle initial and the first four letters of the last name. Jane Q Public born on 1/1/2000 would be 010100JANQPUBL. *While the registration card is not usually needed at a meet, if an issue arises, the swimmer is required to have their card available for confirmation of eligibility.*

NOTE: The first time a swimmer registers, a form of proof of birth date will be required, so remember to bring a copy of the swimmer’s birth certificate.

The cost for a full year card for 2014 is $60 and is renewed annually. There is also a shortened, seasonal swimmer registration for summer-only swimmers. The registration form is available on the website under documents or the SI Swimming website.

For swimmers that swim in novice meets or YMCA meets, there is not a registration requirement other than through the team.

Meet Entry

On the team website, there is a tab for events. This is where meets will be posted. Usually, the meet entry sheet will be available for download from the event. The meet information sheet is also available on the SI Swimming website. Meet information is generally posted at least four weeks in advance.

Consult the coach for which events to enter. Many meets have a limitation on the number of events for a swimmer to enter. The maximum number of events a swimmer can enter, if there are not meet-specific limitations, is 5 events per day. Some meets, such as championship meets and the JOMAX, will also have a limit of total events for the meet. As the swimmer ages and gains more responsibility, it is expected that the swimmer, rather than the parent, arrange events with the coach.

To determine which events the swimmer is eligible for, first determine the level of the meet. There are usually several things you will see on a meet information sheet. There are **time standards** associated with each event by age group. The **age groups** generally are 8-and-under, 9 – 10, 11 – 12, 13 – 14, and 15-and-over. There are some exceptions depending on the meet and the distance. Some longer events do not have time standards for the younger age groups, so something like the 500 Freestyle will be classified as 12-and-under since there is not a time standard for 8-and-under, and 9 – 10. If the age group states ‘Open’, any swimmer is eligible, but consult the coach prior to signing up a younger swimmer for these events.

Once it has been determined which events the swimmer will compete, the meet entry must be completed by clicking on the Attend/Decline button on the appropriate event on the Events section of the website. You have to be logged in to complete the meet entry. The meet entries are usually due 11-12 days prior to the first day of the meet.

Note: The swimmers age is **as of the first day of the meet.**

Once the meet entry sheet is filled out, determine the cost for the meet. The cost as of 2014 winter season is $4 per event plus a once-per-meet athlete surcharge of $5. **Please read the meet information document to verify the costs.** Usually championship level meets have a different pricing structure. The cost of the meet will be billed through the YMCA.

Meet Preparation

Usually on or by the Wednesday prior to the meet, the logistics of the meet will be published on the SI Swimming website. The director or the coaches will make every attempt to publish this information via e-mail and/or on the website. Also, the entry sheet printed from the Team Manager’s submittal to the meet host (this will not include entries that are made directly to the host or to the SI Swimming office) will also be disseminated so the swimmer and parents can verify the swimmer entry and entry time for the meet. If there is an issue, please bring it to the coach’s attention as soon as possible.

Included in the logistics of the meet will be warm-up times, expected meet schedule, and any team lane timing assignments. Please also check the weather for the days of the meet so you and your swimmer will be adequately prepared for the weather. Especially in the winter season, there can be some cold and stormy weather. The meets will generally be held regardless of the weather conditions save for lightning or any condition that will represent an immediate hazard to the swimmers, parents, officials, and volunteers.

The Meet

Before leaving for the meet, preferably a day or more ahead, do a full equipment check – check seams on swimsuits and straps on goggles! The most prudent swimmer always has a spare everything in their swim bag.

**The most prudent parent/swim taxi driver also knows a bit about the parking at where the meet is being held.** There are HUGE variations in the meet facilities which means huge variations in the availability of parking. Some facilities have large dedicated parking areas, but at other facilities, it’s catch-as-catch-can on-the-street parking. The coach or other parents can give you a general rule about how much extra time you may need to set aside depending on the facility, the time of day, and the day of the week.

**The swimmer should wear the team t-shirt or hoodie to the meet**. The swimmer should also wear their team cap during their events. If you need a t-shirt or cap, please see the coach on deck at practice. There are also a limited number of hoodies available at the MV pool. Please have the swimmer label their team shirt and hoodie. It can get jumbled under the canopy with all the swimmers congregating in the enclosed space, and they’re hard to tell apart, obviously!

**It is highly recommended arriving at the meet at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the scheduled MVY warm-up time**. The team will have an area set up with canopies to provide cover for you and the swimmer. The swimmer should get situated and stretch with the team prior to entering the pool for warm up. The swimmer should also check-in upon arrival. The check-in is usually a couple of tables set up around the entrance to the pool or close to the pool. The check-in involves verifying which events the swimmer is scheduled to swim for that session. The swimmer should record which events they are checked in. If there is discrepancy, let the coach on deck know immediately.

The swimmers will warm up in the pool as a team. The swimmer must have a coach on deck and observing prior to entering the pool. Towards the end of the warm up session, there will be a diving lane assigned so the swimmer can get the feel of the pool’s blocks. On completion of the warm up, the swimmer should dry off and get dressed appropriately to conserve body heat. If the swimmer did not check in prior to warm-up, usually if the team has the first warm-up, the swimmer will check in at this time.

Note: The check-in for the first 8 events usually closes 30 minutes prior to the start of the session. If the swimmer is unable to check in within that time frame, let the coach know and the coach can check in the swimmer.

The event’s heat and lane assignments will be posted on the pool deck prior to an event. Ask the coach or another more experienced parent or swimmer where the heat and lane assignments are usually posted for that particular pool. Have the swimmer get the heat and lane assignment and record it so the swimmer know when and where they are supposed to swim. As a rule, the events will take place in numerical order so there should be ample opportunity for the swimmer to get to his lane assignment prior to the heat start. At least 2 -3 heats prior to the swimmer’s heat, the swimmer should consult the coach with the heat and lane assignment. The coach will give the swimmer any particular instructions for the event.

When the swimmer gets to the lane, they need to check in with the timer that has the clipboard to verify the timer’s record has the swimmer’s name assigned to the heat. When the swimmer’s heat is next, the swimmer should make final preparations such as ensuring cap and goggles are in place. After the heat previous to the swimmer’s heat is finished, the meet referee will blow two whistles. The swimmer will approach the block and get ready to mount the block. The starter will then blow one long whistle. The swimmer will mount the block. Once all the swimmers in the heat have mounted the block, the meet referee will turn the heat over to the starter. The starter will announce “take your mark”. The swimmer will then take a starting stance on the block. The starter will then start the race with a horn. The swimmer will then enter the pool and swim like a Seal. On completion of the heat, the swimmer will stay in the water, on the wall, until the next heat has left the blocks (this is called a fly-over start)\*. The swimmer will then immediately exit the pool. Upon exiting the pool, the swimmer should ask the timer what their time was, even if the swimmer was disqualified (disqualification will be covered shortly). The swimmer will then check out with the coach and tell the coach the time. The coach will go over the swimmer event results and what the coach observed.

\* The start procedure will be different for backstroke. On the long whistle, the swimmer in the pool will exit at that time.

Disqualification – At some point in the swimmer’s meet swimming experience, the swimmer will most likely be disqualified for some infraction during an event. While it is disappointing to the swimmer, it can also be a learning experience. For less experienced swimmers, this is usually a matter of needing to refine stroke technique to comply with USA Swimming Regulations. For more experienced swimmers, it may be a matter of a simple mistake during the swim. The stroke and turn official should talk with the swimmer after the heat to explain the infraction. The swimmer should relay this information to the coach during to post-heat check out. If there is a disagreement with the infraction, the coach will appeal the disqualification with the meet referee. **The swimmer or parent should not be the party that appeals the infraction with the officials.**

During the meet, the swimmer should do several things to better allow success to occur. First, stay warm. Second, stay hydrated. Third, stay fueled. Lastly, have fun and cheer on your teammates, but pay attention to the meet. Sometimes events can be combined or skipped due to few or no swimmers. In these cases, a swimmer’s next event can sneak up in a hurry. Initially, better to be too early than miss an event. The penalty for a missed event, or No Show in official parlance, is the swimmer misses that event and is penalized by not being able to swim the swimmer’s next scheduled event.

For Parents during the meet – Depending on the size of the meet and the size of the team in relation to the total number of swimmers in a session, there will usually be timing assignments for the team. The meets are run on almost a 100% volunteer basis so in order for the meet to run and run smoothly, the parents need to take turns with the timing assignments. There will usually be a sheet in the team area with timing chair time slots. Please sign up to support your team, the meet, and the sport in general. Timing is a good way to talk with other parents and is a very good observation point for the meet. There is an explanation of the timer’s responsibilities on the website.

Post Meet

On the completion of the session, please pick up your area prior to leaving. Remember we are guests at the host’s facility. Go through your things to ensure you have everything. The last people out try to recover anything left behind but it is not guaranteed. While the meet host will also attempt to recover anything, they are usually at a multiple user facility and have to completely vacate the premises, so any lost and found is ad hoc.

Within 72 hours of the last event, the results of the meet are posted on the SI Swimming website. Once the results are approved by Si Swimming, the results are then uploaded to USA Swimming to the SWIMS database.

If there are any questions about any of this, there are usually parents around that can assist plus the coaches are very familiar with the process.

Links:

MISSION VALLEY SEALS: [www.mvyseals.org](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CDavid%5Cdownloads%5Cwww.mvyseals.org)

USA SWIMMING: [www.usaswimming.org](http://www.usaswimming.org/)

SI SWIMMING: [www.siwimming.org](http://www.siwimming.org)